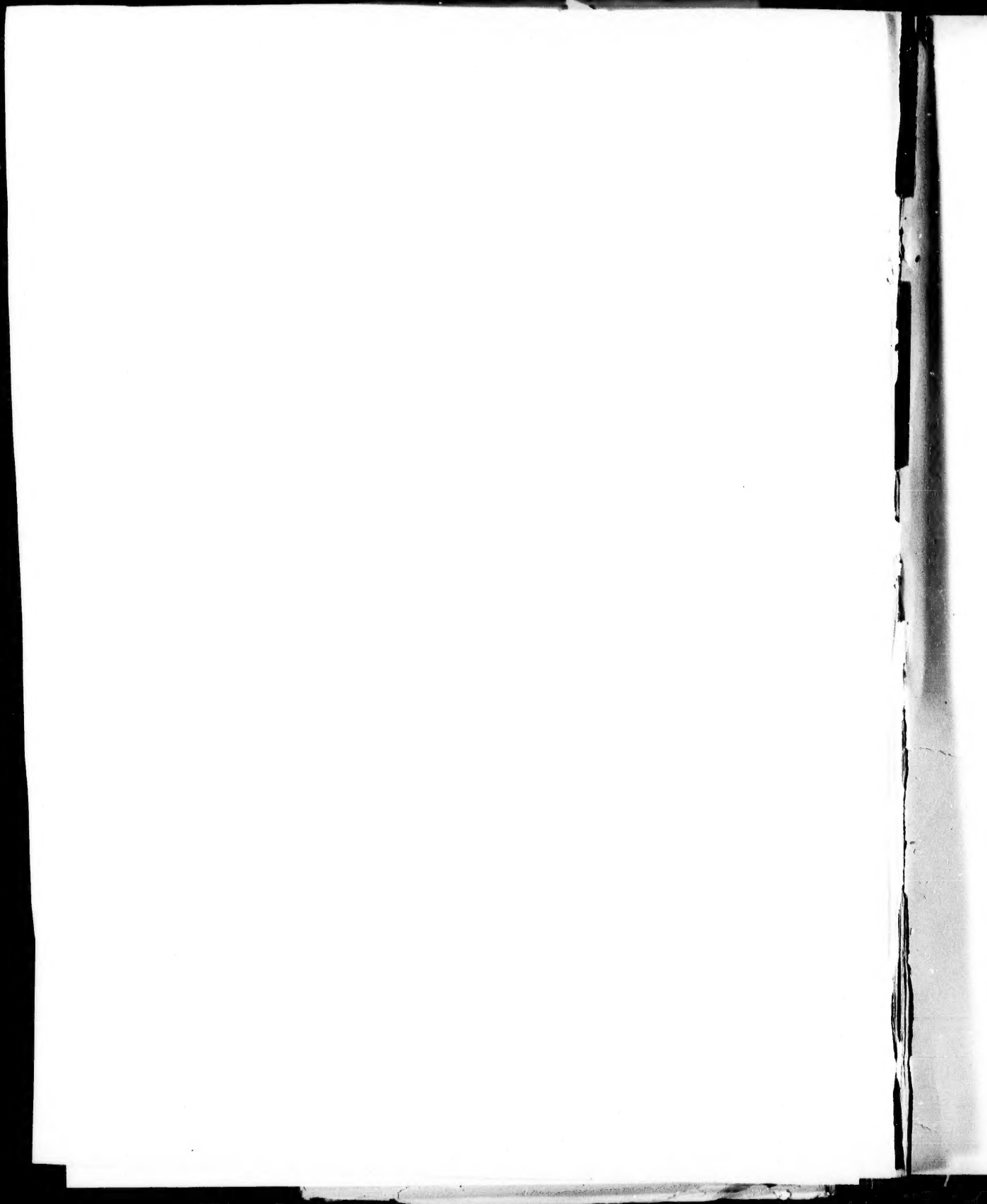




III.—*Sources of Early Canadian History.*

By GEORGE STEWART, JUN.

(Read May 28, 1885.)

The most conspicuous figure in the early history of French colonization in America is, beyond any doubt, Louis de Buade, Count of Palluau and Frontenac. He was twice governor of New France, and his administration covers two of the most romantic periods in the progress and career of the country. His mastery over the Indian nature has never been excelled. He understood the character of the savage well, and ruled him with the rod of iron, or the blandishments of the courtier, as occasion suited. Frontenac first came to Quebec, after a brilliant military experience in Europe, in 1672,—a matured man of fifty-two years of age, full of energy, zeal and enterprise. He continued in office from that date until 1682, when, owing to his quarrels with the clergy and his Intendant, and certain trading operations forbidden by the court, reaching the ear of the king, he was recalled to France, and Le Fèvre de La Barre, a soldier of note, was appointed in his stead. De La Barre, however, did not reign long. His career proved disastrous in the extreme, and the miserable policy he pursued crippled the resources of the little colony, and lowered the prestige of France in the eyes of the Indians. The king recalled him in the third year of his governorship, and sent in his place the Marquis de Denonville, a pious colonel of dragoons, who arrived in Quebec in the autumn of 1685. De Denonville proved even a more incapable ruler than his predecessor, and he had not been long in the country before he had brought it down to the very brink of ruin. One disaster followed quickly on another, and the Massacre of Lachine, in 1689, was the culminating blot on the troublous administration of the weak and impotent marquis. It was then that all eyes again turned to Frontenac, now in his seventieth year. The old warrior was forgiven his past follies by Louis, and once more took up the governorship of the struggling settlement of La Nouvelle France. He reached Quebec in the autumn of 1689, and was received with fireworks and jubilations. He asserted his old power over the Indians, and soon had them under subjection. His memorable defeat of Phips, and numerous small victories over other enemies of his country, together with his general conduct of affairs lent lustre to his somewhat eventful reign. He died at Quebec in 1698, in the seventy-eighth year of his age, sincerely mourned by all New France.

The materials from which this brief story is drawn are copious and rich. A large portion of the manuscript sources may be found in the invaluable collection of papers relating to New France, in the Archives of the Marine and Colonies, the Archives Nationales, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and in the office of the Provincial Registrar at Quebec. The Archives of New York, Massachusetts, and Canada, have made extensive transcripts from these documents as follows:—

1. "Correspondance Officielle," first series, Vols. I—V. There are transcripts from the Paris documents copied in France for the State of New York, and translations of all of them are in the ninth and tenth volumes of the "Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York."

2. "Correspondance Officielle," second series, Vols. II, IV—VIII. These papers exist in manuscript, and have not been translated into English. There are copies in the Library of Parliament, Ottawa, and in the Archives Office of the Quebec Government.

3. A collection of papers made by an agent of Massachusetts at Paris, Mr. Ben. Perley-Poore, in 1844. They were copied afterward in Boston on an order from the Quebec Government, and are in the keeping of the Registrar at Quebec. These documents were published in four large quartos by the Quebec Government, in 1883-85, under the general title "Collection de Manuscrits." Mr. Perley-Poore's copies, comprising ten large volumes, are to be found in the Archives' Rooms of the State House, Boston. These papers are very valuable as far as they go, but the copyist left many gaps unfilled, and returned to Massachusetts without completing his work.

The original Register and Proceedings of Council, in several volumes, remain in very fair condition in the Archives of the Quebec Government. The first, a folio bound in calf and indexed, bears two titles, the first of which is, "Régistre des Insinuations du Conseil Supérieur de 1663 à 1682," pp. 96. It begins with the king's edict creating the Superior Council, dated April 1st, 1663, and ends with the "Procès Verbal" of the Superior Council concerning the "Redaction" of the "Code Civil," or Ordinance of Louis, April 14th, 1667.

The second title is, "Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle France, 1663 à 1676," pp. 281. It begins with an *arrêt* of the Superior Council ordering the registration of the king's edict of April 1st, 1663, creating the Superior Council for New France, to be held at Quebec; and ends with an interlocutory judgment, dated December 19th, 1676, upon a petition of François Noir Roland, complaining of his curate for refusing him absolution. This book or register is authenticated by the certificate of the governor, Comte de Frontenac, on the first page, as follows: "Le Présent Régistre du Conseil Souverain contenant trois cents soixante et seize feuillets a été ce jour paraphé *ne varietur* par premier et dernier, par nous Louis de Buade de Frontenac Chevallier Comte de Palluan, Conseiller du Roy en ses Conseils, Gouverneur et Intendant Général pour sa Majesté, en la Nouvelle France, Québec, le quinziesme Janvier mille six cents soixante et quinze.—FRONTENAC." The entries in general throughout this end of the book are authenticated by the governor, bishop, intendant, councillors, or clerk of the Council; and the last, or two hundred and eighty-first leaf, is signed by Duchesneau, intendant, and by Dupont, member of the Council. Its general contents consist of a variety of orders, regulations, ordinances, judgments, civil and criminal, of the Superior Council, licitations, and adjudications of Crown estates, representations to the king and his ministers upon various subjects. There are the four following volumes of this Register in the Archives at Quebec, bearing the dates, 1677 to 1680, 1681, 1681 to 1687, and 1688 to 1693, respectively. Each of these contains interesting details of Council proceedings during the first administration of Frontenac, the time of de La Barre and de Denonville, and during Frontenac's second term.

The "Edits et Ordonnances," Vol. III, contains copies of the Commissions of Frontenac, La Barre and de Denonville.

For particulars concerning the youth of Frontenac, his family and marriage, see Parkman's Appendix, where, among other sources, are named the Journal of Jean Héroard, physician to the Court, part of which is cited in "Le Correspondant" of Paris for 1873; Pinard, "Chronologie Historique-Militaire;" "Les Mémoires de Sully;" "Table de la Gazette de France;" "Mémoires de Philippe Hurault" (in Petitot); Jal, "Dictionnaire Critique, Biographique, et d' Histoire," article, "Frontenac;" "Historiettes de Tallemant des Réaux," IX, (ed. Monmerqué); "Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier," Vols. I-III; and "Mémoires du Duc de Saint Simon." Frontenac's will is printed in the "Magazine of American History," June, 1883, p. 465, New York.

At Frontenac's death we have an "Oraison funèbre du Comte de Frontenac, par le Père Olivier Goyer," preached from the text, *In multitudine videbor bonus et in bello fortis*. A copy of this eulogy, containing a running commentary on its sentiments strongly adverse to the views of the preacher, is preserved in the Seminary of Quebec. These comments, selections from which will be found in Parkman's "Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV.," pp. 431-434, are, Abbé Casgrain informs me, from the caustic pen of Abbé Charles Glandelet, who came to Canada in 1675, and laboured for half a century in the Seminary.

The list of printed books relating to the period under consideration is very long, but few of these writings are entirely trustworthy as historical authorities,—prejudice and partisanship characterizing them for the most part. The contests of the day developed bitter antagonisms, and it was not easy at the time to withstand their influences. When we investigate the writings of these contemporaries, we find a remarkable lack of unity and sympathy prevailing, and this often extends to matters of trifling import. Unsatisfactory as chronicles as these books are, they are valuable as expressions of current partisan feeling, and in the latter form they frequently serve to throw light on all transactions. Foremost among these early narratives is the "Premier Établissement de la Foy dans la Nouvelle France" of Father Le Clercq. This work, it is said, was written under the eye of Frontenac himself. Certainly it is highly coloured, and presents the Recollet side in a strong and bold light. Bacqueville de La Potherie's "Histoire de l'Amerique Septentrionale depuis 1534 jusqu'à 1701," (Paris, 1722, four volumes,) is an exceedingly respectable authority, often quoted, and particularly useful for the light which it throws on the relations of Frontenac and de Callières. It is also held in high esteem as a contribution upon the condition of the Indians at that time. Charlevoix describes it as containing "undigested and ill-written material on a good portion of Canadian history."

The works of Hennepin, La Hontan, Tonti, and Marquette may be included among the principal early narratives which are worth consulting by the student. With the help of official and other contemporary documents, these writings may, in the main, satisfy the mind.

The "Histoire du Canada," by Abbé Belmont, Superior of the Seminary of Montreal during 1713 and 1724, is a short history of affairs from 1608 to 1700. The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec printed, about 1840, in their "Collection de Memoires," a small edition of the work from a manuscript copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. This essay is generally accurate, and the views expressed are evidently the result of careful consideration.

The general history of the administrations of Frontenac, de La Barre, and de Denon-

ville is exhaustively treated by Father François Xavier de Charlevoix in his "Histoire et Description Générale de la Nouvelle France, avec le Journal Historique d'un Voyage fait par l'ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale," which was issued at Paris in 1744. This work is the first in point of importance and value, and sets forth the Jesuit side of the story ably and well. Shea, who edited an edition of the book, says: "Access to State Papers and the archives of the religious order to which he belonged, experience and skill as a practised writer, a clear head and an ability to analyze, arrange, and describe, fitted him for his work." On the other hand, Parkman often speaks of Charlevoix's "usual carelessness." In 1744 there were two editions of this history published, one in three volumes quarto, and the other in six volumes of small size, with the plates folded. "Heriot," says Justin Winsor, "published an abridged translation of Charlevoix in 1804, but the English reader and the student of Canadian history owes a great deal to the version and annotations of Dr. Shea, which this scholar printed in New York in six sumptuous volumes in 1866-72." Charlevoix, of course, gives great prominence to the ecclesiastical side of the subject. He is not altogether unfair to Frontenac, though the Recollets do not fare so well at his hands.

Abbé La Tour, not a very trustworthy authority, wrote "Memoirs sur la vie de M. de Laval, premier Evêque de Quebec" in 1761. Only one volume appeared, though the scope of the work demanded two. The unfair manner in which Bishop St. Vallier was treated in the manuscript of the second volume, led the worthy prelate's family to interpose objections to the publication of the matter, and it was not published. Frontenac is bitterly assailed in the first volume, his faults are greatly magnified, and very serious charges are preferred against him.

A useful work, which demands notice in the consideration of this period, is "L'Histoire de l'Hôtel Dieu de Québec, de 1639 à 1716," by the Rev. Mother Françoise Juchereau de St. Ignace, printed in Paris in 1751. It contains many facts and incidents, and is especially rich in details concerning the missionary activity of the time, and on the attempt made by the clergy to evangelize the savages. A supplementary work, prepared with great care and thoroughness from original documents, and bearing the same title, has been written by Abbé H. R. Casgrain. It is brought down to 1840, and was published at Quebec in 1878.

In the third series of "Historical Documents," published under the auspices of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec in 1871, is a paper entitled "Recueil de ce qui s'est passé en Canada au sujet de la guerre, tant des Anglais que des Iroquois, depuis l'année 1682." It contains a full account of the Lachine massacre from the pen of an eyewitness. The author accompanied Subercase to the scene.

In a collection entitled "Bibliotheca Americana: Collection d'ouvrages inédits ou rares sur l'Amérique," with the imprint of Leipsic and Paris, appeared the "Mémoire sur les Mœurs, Costumes, et Religions des Sauvages de l'Amérique Septentrionale, par Nicolas Perrot, publié pour la première fois par le R. P. Tailhan, de la Compagnie de Jésus, 1864." Charlevoix, La Potherie, Abbé Ferland and other writers on early Canadian history attach considerable importance to this memoir. It will be found often quoted in their narratives. Harris (No. 833) says that this work seems to have been written day by day from 1665 to the death of Perrot. Colden gives a part of the narrative in his "History of the Five Indian Nations," London, 1747.

Approaching our own time, we have François Xavier Garneau's "Histoire du Canada," the accepted French Canadian authority. He began writing his work in 1840, and published the first volume in Quebec, in 1845, the second in 1846, and the third, treating of events down to 1792, in 1848. A new edition, revised and corrected, and brought down to 1840, appeared at Montreal from John Lovell's press, in 1852, and a third edition at Quebec in 1859. In 1882, the fourth edition, edited by his son, Alfred Garneau, the author of "Les Seigneurs de Frontenac," appeared at Montreal. This edition is enriched by a biography of the historian by the Hon. P. J. O. Chauveau, and a poem by Louis Honoré Fréchette. The English reader is cautioned against Bell's so-called translation of Garneau's History, which contains many unwarrantable liberties with the text.

The ecclesiastical history of Canada is particularly illustrated by Abbé J. B. A. Ferland in his "Cours d'Histoire du Canada, 1534-1759," (Quebec, 1861 and 1865, two volumes). The author died while the second volume was passing through the press, and the completion of the publication devolved on Abbé Laverdière, one of the ripest scholars in the Canadian priesthood. Ferland had access to many documents of great interest, and his work shows judgment and a skilful handling of the rich store of materials within his reach.

The "Histoire de la Colonie Française en Canada," with maps, by Abbé Faillon, a Sulpitian priest of very great ability, was projected on an extensive plan. The author visited Canada on three separate occasions, spending several years in the country, and making the most of his opportunities in gathering his material, not only there, but from the archives of the Propaganda at Rome, and from the public offices in Paris. His work is of great and paramount value, but it must be read with a full perception of the author's intention to rear a monument to commemorate the labours and trials of the Sulpitians of Montreal. Three volumes only appeared, the first two in 1865, and the third in 1866. The death of M. Faillon at Paris, in 1871, prevented further publication, but he has left in manuscript enough prepared material to complete the work as far as the conquest of 1759-60. The book was published anonymously, according to the custom of the Congregation of St. Sulpice.

Two volumes of Francis Parkman's series of "France and England in North America" deal intimately with the period covered by the administrations of Frontenac, de La Barre and de Denonville. These are his "Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV," (Boston, 1877,) and his "La Salle, and the Discovery of the Great West" (Boston, 1879). The chief questioner of Parkman's views has been Abbé Casgrain, whose position is best understood from his "Une Paroisse Canadienne au XVII^e Siècle," Quebec, 1880. Of Mr. Parkman as an historian, there has been a wide recognition of a learning, that has neglected no resource; a research, which has proved fortunate in its results; a judgment, which, though Protestant, is fair and liberal; a critical perception, which in the conflict of testimony keeps him accurate and luminous; and a style, which has given his narrative the fascinations of a romance.

John Dennis wrote a tragedy, "Liberty Asserted," which was acted in London in 1704, in which Frontenac was made a character, together with an English governor and an Iroquois chief. Betterton acted in it. A romantic picture of the period is furnished in an amusing novel by M. Joseph Marmette, entitled "François de Bienville," in which Frontenac figures as one of the principal characters. Frontenac's expeditions against the

Iroquois were made the subject of a poem by Alfred B. Street, entitled "Frontenac, or the Atotarho of the Iroquois," London and New York, 1849.

Mr. T. P. Bedard, of the Archives Department, Quebec, has a paper in the "Annuaire de l'Institut Canadien," Nos. 7 and 8, 1880-81, which discusses the first and second administrations of the Count, and sheds some light on the social and political aspects of the country between 1672 and 1698, when Frontenac died.

Other printed books relating to the period considered in these pages, are Michael Bibaud's "Histoire du Canada sous la domination Française," published at Montreal in 1837, second edition in 1845; "The History of Canada from its first discovery in 1796," by William Smith, Quebec, 1815, "Histoire des Canadiens-Français, 1608-1880," by Benjamin Sulte, Montreal, 1882-83; and "Narrative and Critical History of America, with Bibliographical and Descriptive essays on its Historical sources and authorities," (eight volumes), edited by Justin Winsor, LL.D., 1885, Boston.

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